

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0454/01 1371545
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 161545Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3256
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3439
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0318
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0936
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY LIMA 5583
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000454

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ABLD](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [SENV](#)

AR, BR, PE, CI, PA, UY

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN CONE COM CONFERENCE SHARE BEST PRACTICES
IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY, CONSULAR AND ENVIRONMENTAL SPHERES

Summary

¶1. (U) Southern Cone COM's met in Santiago April 25-26, where they shared information on environmental ("green building"), public diplomacy, and consular best practices in the region. They also heard from OES on its priorities, including on climate change and biofuels. A DVC with Customs and Border Protection offered useful insights on how to facilitate travel and entry to the U.S. This is the second of two cables. Discussion of regional security issues, economic policy matters, and embassies' cooperation with SOUTHCOM reported septel. End summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Paul Simons and Embassy Santiago hosted April 25-26 the fourth iteration of the Southern Cone Chiefs of Mission conference, an initiative begun in 2006 to encourage exchange of views and best practices on issues of common interest to missions in this region. Ambassadors Simons, Tony Wayne (Argentina), Cliff Sobel (Brazil), Jim Cason (Paraguay), and Frank Baxter (Uruguay) were joined by Rear Admiral Harry B. Harris, Jr., J-3 Director of Operations, SOUTHCOM; Ambassador Reno Harnish, OES PDAS; and, Chris McMullen, WHA DAS for South America. DCM Urban and E/Pol Counselor were also present for all working sessions.

Going Green

¶3. (U) OBO Acting Director Adam Namm and OBO staff April 25 briefed via DVC on how OBO is integrating "green building" techniques into new embassies. OBO's 2010 budget will include a three-fold increase in conservation measures, a working capital energy efficiency fund for new building, and requirements for energy saving performance contracts (ESPCs). It is developing a "Green Guide" for posts worldwide. Ambassador Simons suggested OBO consider public/private partnerships for solar (photovoltaic); OBO noted it had not yet done so globally but agreed to explore the idea. Representatives from Embassy Santiago's Green Committee outlined their initiatives and provided copies to COMs of its Action Plan. The Embassy's Green Initiative Action Plan's components include (1) Solar, (2) Conservation (energy and water) and (3) recycling. The Plan consists of easy-to-implement and low cost efficiency measures, as well as longer-term deliverables. The Plan was launched in March and had generated significant employee enthusiasm. Specific short term measures included:

-- adjusted Embassy temp by 2 degrees
-- turned off one elevator after hrs

- encourage "stair policy" for employees
- created awards/incentive program for employees (\$50 to top three reducers of electricity consumption/month)
- Facilities offered to help weatherstrip/caulk govt-owned residences (and to advise LES on this)

Longer term initiatives included:

- installation of solar heating thermal panels at the CMR
- re-landscaping portion of CMR and/or Chancery to less water-intensive, native plants (in partnership w/ Chilean universities)
- looking into installation of drip irrigation at CMR and/or Chancery

OBO expressed appreciation for Santiago's green initiatives and said it would consider employing some of the ideas presented, particularly energy savings proposals at USG-owned residences.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Harnish provided an overview of administration policies on climate change, the Energy Independence and Security Act, the just concluded WIREC renewables conference, and environmental chapters/cooperation in FTAs, as well as U.S. and Brazilian interest in debunking media reports that production of biofuels is contributing to food scarcity.

ACTION FOR OES: The Ambassadors expressed interest in learning more about OPIC's USD 1.5 billion energy investment fund and more specifically about the new Latin America Energy

Initiative. The Ambassadors also requested more public diplomacy materials on biofuels, specifically the timeframe for moving to second generation technologies. In the context of U.S.-Chile judicial training for environmental law enforcement (under auspices of U.S.-Chile FTA) all Ambassadors expressed interest in increased law enforcement/prosecution capacity building and suggested the Department consider designing a new IV program on regional environmental law enforcement, which would both educate and help build regional relationships.

Best Practices: Public Diplomacy

¶5. (U) Santiago PAO reviewed best practices in Public Diplomacy. Ambassadors contributed information on strategies that have worked well at their posts, and offered suggestions for networking. Among the points covered were:

- American Corners (ACs) effectiveness in establishing and maintaining a PD presence for the U.S. outside of the capital city. One of Chile's five ACs has a special orientation to science, technology, environmental, and energy issues and frequently hosts USG visitors who are coming to Chile for other sci/tech-related purposes. Santiago employs a full-time LES as AC coordinator, a key factor in making the program work. Ambassador Sobel suggested a DVC to share best practices on ACs and other items involving PAOs.

- Strategies for outreach. Ambassador Wayne noted his PA Section has all Embassy employees fill out a "skills bank" form, noting areas of interest and expertise, so they can be programmed at appropriate speaking venues. Ambassador Cason said a standard "stump speech" has been developed about U.S.-Paraguay relations and the work of the Embassy for all officers to use at outreach talks. Ambassador Sobel shared information about USA Fairs, traveling exhibits with comprehensive information about the U.S., drawing on multiple offices and agencies. Ambassador Wayne described the recent NGO Fair held in Buenos Aires and recommended reading Buenos Aires 533, which details the excellent outreach achieved. An English course for working journalists in Santiago involves 15 journalists who have intermediate levels of English fluency; other embassies had also found this a useful program.

-- Websites, and the duties of webmasters. All agreed that film and video streaming, press conferences, messages from the Ambassador, and other uses of technology on the website are effective in reaching audiences, especially the young. Ambassador Wayne suggested a DVC among webmasters in the region to share their best practices and innovations. Ambassador Cason noted his staff also scours popular websites and blogs for evidence of disinformation about the U.S., which the Embassy can then quickly counter.

¶6. (U) The COMs discussed various strategies for supporting academic exchanges and English language training. In Paraguay, the business sector offers microscholarships, and the BNC provides significant discounts. Ambassador Sobel pointed to the value of the BSC Youth Ambassadors (YA) program, which receives more than 3,000 applications for its 35 annual slots. The Ambassador sought and gained approval from L to send letters to the presidents of U.S. universities in support of YAs, which has paid off with scholarships. He suggested a region-wide DVC on the YA program and others. Ambassador Wayne cited the success of the Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC) program, which hosts English teachers in San Antonio. Ambassador Cason described his foray into performing with well-known Paraguayan artists on a CD to raise money for English language instruction at the BNC in MOnTEvideo.

Best Practices: Consular

¶7. (U) Santigao's Consul General opened a discussion on consular work, briefing on current issues facing Consular Affairs. He noted worldwide statistics for visas, passports and adoptions and CA efforts to meet rising demand for services. He also touched on several overarching issues including consular leadership, victim's assistance and children's issues. The Embassy's Deputy CG then presented

two of Santiago's current initiatives. The first is a systematic approach to matching resources with visa application demand called "wait times and tripwires" and the second is a developmental program called "Locally Engaged Staff of the Month". This innovative practice increases efficiency and encourages cross training. Lively discussion followed on a variety of topics including eligible family members regaining authority to adjudicate visas and the public diplomacy challenges of long visa wait times. Ambassador Wayne commended work done with customer satisfaction surveys by Embassy BA's consular teams, which led to new efficiencies and boosted customer satisfaction ratings to 95 percent positive.

Digital Video Conference: CBP Miami

¶8. (U) The conference concluded with a DVC with Customs Border Protection's (CBP) Miami office. Participants from Miami were Harold Woodward, Director of Operations, Miami Region and Diane Loftus, Assistant Port Director, Miami Airport Passenger Processing. CBP reviewed referral procedure by which posts may request courtesies of the port be extended to very high-level travelers and noted the importance of at least 24 hours advance notification. In response to a question about silent paroles, CBP stated such arrangements should be made through the DHS/ Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or Legal Attaches at post. CBP described the system of hard and soft secondary referrals and how that workload is managed. CBP invited DVC participants to visit the facility if they are passing through.

¶9. (U) COMs suggested creating opportunities for South American media to visit and do stories about the facility and suggested having Mr. Woodward or the port director record a video that could provide information about the admission process, to be shown in consular waiting rooms. CBP explained that there was a way to enter a " primary outlook

override" when a traveler is identified as not being the subject of a match in the database but people with common names may still face additional scrutiny and referral to secondary. In closing, Mr. Woodward emphasized the importance of transparency and advance notification with special cases.

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